

Behavior Modification: Oregon Ducks Football Coaches Don't Yell At Players

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The image of a coach berating one of his players is familiar to anyone who's watched a game of football. Unless you watch Oregon Ducks football, anyway.

In that case, it's a foreign sight. And that's by design: Ducks coaches don't yell at their players.

According to [The Wall Street Journal](#), the no-yell approach to coaching is one that has been in place at Oregon for years. Before current head coach Mark Helfrich, Chip Kelly instituted a policy in which all members of the coaching staff, as well as players and other administrators, are approached as equals on the team.

And that means respect is given to every person.



"Guys in our program don't get yelled at and treated like they are beneath the coaches," said offensive coordinator Scott Frost said. "There's more enjoyment and laughing in our building than almost any football building in the country."

Heisman winner Marcus Mariota says players learn more when their teammates approach them in a positive manner to discuss mistakes and how they might be corrected. Motivations of fear or shame are absent from the Ducks program.

Not everyone understands or prefers that approach, however. Former Oregon defensive coordinator Nick Aliotti said his preference is to yell at kids and push them with a little tough love. But his style proved ineffective with Ducks players, forcing him to change his style.

"I used to like kids that you could get after and really coach hard," Aliotti said. "But society has changed."

When flare-ups happen on the opposite sideline -- as was the case in the semifinal playoff game against Florida State, where Jameis Winston and other players were getting into fights with coaches and themselves -- Oregon's athletes look on in awe. It's something they never see within their own program.

And for the Ducks, that style has fared just fine.

A Sad History of Abusive Coaches

By LYNN ZINSER APRIL 3, 2013 3:25 PM 31 Comments



Mike Leach coaching Texas Tech in a game against Texas A&M in 2008. Associated Press

Unfortunately, Mike Rice's antics as the Rutgers men's basketball coach falls into an all-too-rich history of coaches who crossed the line between garden variety berating of players (usually euphemistically called intensity) and out-and-out abuse.

The good news is, video of Rice launching basketballs at players and subjecting them to a constant stream of degradation still has the power to appall people, which set in motion an about-face by Rutgers, which had previously been content with a three-game suspension, a \$50,000 fine and the hope that he would change. The resulting firestorm moved [Rutgers to fire Rice on Wednesday](#), although the university is being called on to hold Athletic Director Tim Perneti to account as well.

What all this means is that the public has not been worn down by

sports' most notorious abusers, exposed in their bullying tactics and punished for them, in most cases. There are other examples of coaches' tactics that most people would agree have crossed a line:

Woody Hayes — The infamous Ohio State coach boiled over for a final time on Dec. 28, 1978, in the Gator Bowl. After a Clemson player intercepted a pass by Ohio State quarterback Art Schlichter and was pushed out of bounds on Ohio State's sideline, Hayes punched him. The ensuing outrage cost the ornery coach his job after 28 seasons and 5 national championships at the school.

Bobby Knight — The classic coaching bully, Knight had tremendous success at Indiana, which helped him escape serious consequences from many of his outbursts until 2000, when a video emerged that appeared to confirm the former player Neil Reed's accusation that Knight had tried to choke him. Miles Brand, then Indiana's president, said Knight would henceforth be on a zero-tolerance policy, and Knight was then fired after he grabbed a student who had referred to him as Knight.

Mike Leach — Leach was fired as football coach at Texas Tech after he was accused of sending an injured player into a storage shed as punishment — among other over-the-top coaching “techniques” — but largely because that player's father, Craig James, who was an analyst for ESPN, set off on a mission to expose Leach's behavior. Leach has since been hired by Washington State, where [another player recently accused him](#) of abusive behavior.

Tommy Tuberville — The coach who replaced Leach at Texas Tech found himself in [an unflattering video in November](#). After a fourth-down penalty in an overtime victory over Kansas, Tuberville slapped a graduate assistant in the head, making his headset fly off.

Mark Mangino — Mangino was asked to resign as Kansas' head football coach in December 2009 after numerous allegations of verbal and physical mistreatment of players, including the former defensive lineman [Cory Kipp's account](#) of being made to “bear

crawl” across an artificial-surface field so hot that it burned his hand.

The Consequences of Verbally Abusive Athletic Coaches

 [psychcentral.com /lib/the-consequences-of-verbally-abusive-athletic-coaches/0001152](https://psychcentral.com/lib/the-consequences-of-verbally-abusive-athletic-coaches/0001152)

By John L. Schinnerer, Ph.D.

My 10-year-old son was bullied recently. He was told that he was an “embarrassment.” He was told to “shut up.” He was yelled at and scolded in a tone of voice tinged with disgust and disdain. He was told he would be punished for any mistakes he or his peers made in the future.

Surprisingly, this didn’t happen at school. The bully wasn’t even a peer of his. The bully was his swim coach, a young lady of perhaps 26. She was desperately trying to motivate her swimmers to swim fast in the big meet the next day. And this was her attempt at motivation.

In speaking to the lady in charge of the coaches on this swim team, it quickly became apparent that this type of “incentive” was not only okay with her, it was actually encouraged. She said that 9- and 10-year-old boys were “squirrely” and “needed to be taken down a notch.” She was in full support of her coaches yelling at, embarrassing and insulting young children to motivate them to swim faster. “That’s just the way swimming is,” she said. Had I not spent 12 years of my childhood swimming competitively, I may have believed her.

How Do I Know if My Coach Is a Bully?

To determine if a coach is a bully, you must first know what bullying behavior looks and feels like.

Bullying is aggressive behavior that occurs repeatedly over time in a relationship where there is an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take many forms, including physical violence, verbal abuse, social manipulation and attacks on property. Physical violence is not usually a component of a coaching relationship. If your coach is physically violent with an athlete, call the authorities.

Verbal and emotional abuse is much more common in athletics. It can lead to severe and long-lasting effects on the athlete’s social and emotional development. In a world where “more is better” in terms of training and “no pain means no gain,” there is a great deal of machismo in coaches. Most coaches coach the same way that they were coached while playing the sport growing up. This means that many coaches are still operating as if the training methods used in the Soviet Union in the 1970s are state of the art. “We will deprive you of food until you win gold medal.” Central to this old school mindset is the idea that threat, intimidation, fear, guilt, shame, and name-calling are all viable ways to push athletes to excel.

News flash: None of these is a worthwhile motivator for anyone. These are the bricks which line the road paved to burnout, rebellion and hatred of a once-loved sport.

What Does Verbal and Emotional Abuse Look Like in Athletics?

Usually, this involves a coach telling an athlete or making him or her feel that he or she is worthless, despised, inadequate, or valued only as a result of his or her athletic performance. Such messages are not conveyed merely with the spoken word. They are conveyed by tone of voice, body language, facial expression and withdrawal of physical or emotional support.

This is a large part of why bullying in athletics is so hard to quantify: A clear definition of bullying is

somewhat elusive. Even if we can define it, as above, it's highly difficult to measure.

Bullying is partly defined by the athlete's subjective experience. In other words, if the athlete feels shamed, frightened, or anxious around the coach due to his or her constant shouting, name-calling or threatening, then the label "emotional abuse" is warranted.

How Widespread Is Bullying by Athletic Coaches?

According to the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, there are approximately 2.5 million adults in the United States each year who volunteer their time to coach. Using our tentative number of 50 percent would mean that there are roughly 1.25 million adult coaches who have bullied a child athlete in the past. And this number does not even take into account coaches who are paid for their services and who may be more likely to bully due to the pressures and expectations placed upon them.

What Can I Do about Bullying Coaches?

If you are an athlete, realize that your physical and psychological health is of the greatest importance. It is the primary reason that you are involved in athletics. So, listen to the feeling in your gut. If you feel angry, ashamed, guilty, anxious or sad every time you come near your coach, you may want to look for a new coach. You have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. Exercise that right.

Depending on your coach's volatility, and how strong a bond you have with him or her, you may want to try talking with your coach first to see if he or she is able to change his or her behavior. If your coach is explosive, talk to your parents first and ask for their support. Ask them to intervene on your behalf. Tell them how you feel. If you go to your parents and tell them you feel anxious, scared, angry or ashamed every time you approach your coach, hopefully, they will recognize the need for a face-to-face with the coach.

APA Reference

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LEADERSHIP WIRED BLOG

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL COACHES

BY JOHN C. MAXWELL.

MARCH 27, 2013

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Successful coaches come with a variety of personalities. Mike Ditka and Bobby Knight exuded emotion whereas Phil Jackson had a stoical demeanor. Pat Summitt was the very picture of intensity, while John Madden was gregarious and affable. Geno Auriemma's outspoken and animated style paints a stark contrast to Tom Landry's poised and understated manner of patrolling the sidelines. Yet, for all their differences, great coaches share a common set of characteristics that make them successful.

They Establish Trust

Years ago I had the privilege of spending time with Coach Dick Vermeil who guided the St Louis Rams to victory in Super Bowl XXIV. During our conversation, I inquired about his number one priority in leading his team. Without hesitating, he said, "John, anyone who has coached for long knows that you've got to establish trust with your players before you can ever lead your players. Trust is the most essential thing to establish as a coach. Players will not follow you completely until they can trust you completely." Reflecting on my experience, I agree wholeheartedly—trust precedes influence for every leader of a team.

They Lend Perspective

In the film *Hoosiers*, Norman Dale (Gene Hackman) guides the small-town Hickory Huskers to the Indiana high school state semi-finals. In that era, schools did not compete in separate classifications based on enrollment. For this reason, Hickory's players are about to play inside of the largest venue and in front of the biggest crowd that they have ever seen. Just before the team takes the court, Coach Dale addresses them with the following words.

There's a tradition in tournament play to not talk about the next step until you've climbed the one in front of you. I'm sure going to the State finals is beyond your wildest dreams, so let's just keep it right there. Forget about the crowds, the size of the school, their fancy uniforms, and remember what got you here. Focus on the fundamentals that we've gone over time and time again. And most important, don't get caught up thinking about winning or losing this game. If you put your effort and concentration into playing to your potential, to be the best that you can be, I don't care what the scoreboard says at the end of the game. In my book, we're gonna be winners! OK?!

The movie scene captures one of the primary duties of coaching: giving perspective to the team. Coaches foresee the thoughts and emotions that will be generated by an upcoming challenge. Then, they redirect the team's mindset away from fears and worries by reminding everyone of their strengths and focusing their attention on the task at hand.

They Orchestrate People

If assembling talent was the only thing needed for success, the New York Yankees would win championships year after year since they regularly have the highest payroll in baseball. However, as longtime Boston Celtics coach Red Auerbach observed, "They said you have to use your five best players but I found you win with the five who fit together the best." The best coaches arrange a collection of individuals into a harmonious whole.

They Ensure Preparation

Coaches dream in X's and O's. They pore over video footage of their opponents looking for weaknesses to exploit, and they strategize the game plan most likely to set the pace of play to their team's advantage. However, once the game begins, even the most brilliant schemes cannot compensate for lack of training. Competition has a way of revealing whether or not a team has made the best use of its practice time.

The best coaches begin preparing their players long before they actually compete in a game. They condition the team to perform at its peak mentally, emotionally, and physically by guiding them through drills and exercises. Legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden had a favorite saying: "When opportunity comes, it's too late to prepare." Champions may be recognized during the course of a title game, but they are made months in advance.

They Provide Discipline and Accountability

Coach Don Meyer nicely sums up a coach's aim in providing accountability to the team: "Discipline and demand without being demeaning." Coaches set expectations for the team and for individuals, and then inspire their players live up to those standards. By setting clear goals and expectations, coaches give players goals to stretch toward along with guidelines to ensure that they respect one another.